

And that is nought of yisterday
That riche folk have ful gret might
To helpe, and eek to greve a wight.
The beste and grettest of valour
Diden Richesse ful gret honour,
And besy weren hir to serve;
for that they wolde hir love deserve,
They cleped hir Lady, grete and smalle;
This wyde world hir dredeth alle;
This world is al in hir daungere.
hir court hath many a losengere,
And many a traytour envious,
That ben ful besy and curious
for to dispreisen, and to blame
That best deserven love and name.
Bifore the folk, hem to bigylen,
These losengeres hem preysse, and smylen,
And thus the world with word anoynten;
But afterward they prikke and poynten
The folk right to the bare boon
Bihinde her bak whan they ben goon,
And foule abate the folkes prys.
ful many a worthy man and wys,
An hundred, have they don to dye,
These losengeres, through flattery;
And maketh folk ful straunge be,
Theras hem oughte be prive.
Wel yvel mote they thryve and thee,
And yvel aryved mote they be,
These losengeres, ful of envye!
No good man loveth hir companye.
RICHESSE a robe of purpre on hadde,
Ne trowe not that I lye or madde;
for in this world is noon itliche,
Ne by a thousand deel so riche,
Ne noon so fair; for it ful wel
With orfrys leyde was everydel,
And portrayed in the ribaninges
Of dukes stories, and of kinges.
And with a bend of gold tasseled,
And knoppes fyne of gold ameled.
Aboute hir nekke of gentil entaile
Was shet the riche chevesaile,
In which ther was ful gret plentee
Of stones clere and bright to see.
RICHESSE a girdel hadde upon,
The bokel of it was of a stoon
Of vertu greet, and mochel of might;
for whoso bar the stoon so bright,
Of venim thurte him nothing doute,
While he the stoon hadde him aboute.
That stoon was greetly for to love,
And til a riche mannes bihove
Worth al the gold in Rome and fryse.
The mourdaunt, wrought in noble wyse,
Was of a stoon ful precious,
That was so fyn and vertuous,
That hool a man it coude make
Of palasye, and of toothake,
And yit the stoon hadde suche a grace,
That he was sikker in every place,
Al thilke day, not blind to been,
That fasting mighte that stoon seen.

The barres were of gold ful fyne,
Upon a tissu of satyne,
ful hevy, greet, and nothing light,
In everich was a besaunt wight.
APON the tresses of Richesse
Was set a cercle, for noblesse,
Of brend gold, that ful lighte shoon;
So fair, trowe I, was never noon.
But he were cunning, for the nones,
That coude devysen alle the stones
That in that cercle shewen clere;
It is a wonder thing to here,
for no man coude preysse or gesse
Of hem the valewe or richesse,
Rubyes there were, saphyres, jagounes,
And emeraudes, more than two ounces,
But al bifore, ful sotilly,
A fyn carboucle set saugh I.
The stoon so cler was and so bright,
That, also sone as it was night,
Men mighte seen to go, for nede,
A myle or two, in lengthe and brede.
Swich light tho sprang out of the stoon,
That Richesse wonder brighte shoon,
Bothe hir heed, and al hir face,
And eke aboute hir al the place.
DAME Richesse on hir hond gan lede
A yong man ful of semelibede,
That she best loved of any thing;
His lust was muche in housholding.
In clothing was he ful fetys,
And lovede wel have hors of prys,
He wende to have reproved be
Of thefte or mordre, if that he
Hadde in his stable an hakeney.
And therefore he desyred ay
To been aqueynted with Richesse;
for al his purpos, as I gesse,
Was for to make greet dispense,
Withoute werning or defence.
And Richesse mighte it wel sustene,
And hir dispenses wel mayntene,
And him alwey swich plentee sende
Of gold and silver for to spende
Withoute lakking or daungere,
As it were poured in a garnere.
AN after on the daunce wente
Largesse, that sette al hir entente
for to be honourable and free;
Of Alexandres kin was she;
hir moste joye was, ywis,
Whan that she yaf, & seide have this.
Not Avarice, the foule caytyf,
Was half to grype so ententyf,
As Largesse is to yeve and spende.
And God ynough alwey hir sende,
So that the more she yaf away,
The more, ywis, she hadde alwey.
Gret loos hath Largesse, and gret prys;
for bothe wys folk and unwys
Were hoolly to hir baundon brought,
So wel with yiftes hath she wrought.
And if she hadde an enemy,

I trowe, that she coude craftily
Make him ful sone hir freend to be,
So large of yift and free was she;
Therefore she stood in love and grace
Of riche and poivre in every place.
A ful gret fool is he, ywis,
That bothe riche and nigard is.
A lord may have no maner vice
That greveth more than avarice.
for nigard never with strengthe of hond
May winne him greet lordship or lond.
for freendes al to fewe hath he
To doon his wil perfourmed be.
And whoso wol have freendes here,
He may not holde his tresour dere.
for by ensample I telle this,
Right as an adamaunt, ywis,
Can drawn to him sotilly
The yren, that is leyde therby,
So draweth folkes hertes, ywis,
Silver and gold that yeven is.
LARGESSE hadde on a robe fresshe
Of riche purpur Sarsinesshe.
Wel fourmed was hir face and clere,
And opened had she hir colere;
for she right there hadde in present
Unto a lady maad present
Of a gold broche, ful wel wrought.
And certes, it missat hir nought;
for through hir smokke, wrought with silk,
The flesh was seen, as whyt as milk.
Largesse, that worthy was and wys,
held by the honde a knight of prys,
Was sib to Arthour of Breitaigne.
And that was he that bar the enseigne
Of worship, and the gonfanoun.
And yit he is of swich renoun,
That men of him seye faire thinges
Bifore barouns, erles, and kinges.
This knight was comen al newly
fro toumeyinge faste by;
Ther hadde he doon gret chivalrye
Through his vertu and his maistrye;
And for the love of his lemman
Had cast down many a doughty man.
AN next him daunced dame
fraunchyse,
Arrayed in ful noble gyse.
She was not broun ne dun of
hewe,
But whyt as snowe yfallen newe.
hir nose was wrought at poynt devys,
for it was gentil and tretys;
With eyen gladd, and browes bente;
hir heer down to hir heles wente.
And she was simple as dowwe on tree,
ful debonaire of herte was she.
She durste never seyn ne do
But that thing that hir longed to.
And if a man were in distresse,
And for hir love in heviness,
hir herte wolde have ful greet pitee,
She was so amiable and free.

for were a man for hir bistad,
She wolde ben right sore adrad
That she dide over greet outrage,
But she him holpe his harm to aswage;
hir thoughte it elles a vilanye.
And she hadde on a sukkenye,
That not of hempen herdes was;
So fair was noon in alle Arras.
Lord, it was rideled fetysly!
Ther nas nat oo poynt, trewely,
That it nas in his right assyse,
ful wel yclothed was fraunchyse;
for ther is no cloth sitteth bet
On damiselle, than doth roket.
A womman wel more fetys is
In roket than in cote, ywis.
The whyte roket, rideled faire,
Bitokened, that ful debonaire
And swete was she that it bere.
Yhir daunced a bachelere;
I can not telle you what he highte,
But fair he was, and of good highte,
Al hadde he be, I sey no more,
The lordes sone of Wimesore.
AN next that daunced Curtesye,
That preised was of lowe and hye,
for neither proud ne fool was she.
She for to daunce called me,
I pray God yeve hir right good
grace!
Whan I com first into the place,
She was not nyce, ne outrageous,
But wys and war, and vertuous,
Of faire speche, and faire answer;
Was never wight misseid of here;
She bar no rancour to no wight.
Cler broun she was, and therto bright
Of face, of body avenaunt;
I wot no lady so plesant.
She were worthy for to bene
An emperesse or crowned quene.
AN by hir wente a knight dauncing
That worthy was and wel speking,
And ful wel coude he doon honour,
The knight was fair and stif in stour,
And in armure a semely man,
And wel biloved of his lemman.
AN Ydelnesse than saugh I,
That alwey was me faste by.
Of hir have I, withouten fayle,
Told yow the shap and apparayle,
for, as I seide, lo, that was she
That dide me so greet bountee,
That she the gate of the gardin
Andide, and lect me passen in.
AN after daunced, as I gesse,
Youthe fulfild of lustinesse,
That nas not yit twelve yer of age,
With herte wilde, & thought volage;
Nyce she was, but she ne mente
Noon harm ne slight in hir entente,
But only lust and jolitee,
for yonge folk, wel witen ye,